

MEMO

DATE: February 3, 2005

TO: The Regional Council
The Transportation and Communications Committee

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SUBJECT: Southern California Consensus Program

SUMMARY:

For the third consecutive year, a delegation of chairs and chief executive officers from SCAG region county transportation agencies, Metrolink, and Imperial County will join SCAG to present the Southern California Consensus Program to key members of Congress and the Administration. The February 16th-17th visit will inform congressional representatives and agency officials about the region's shared priorities for the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), which expires on May 31st.

BACKGROUND:

In February 2003, SCAG led the first delegation of regional transportation stakeholders to Washington to present the Southern California Consensus Program for TEA-21 Reauthorization. The advocacy visit, the first cooperation of its kind in Southern California, broke new ground in regional consensus building. The reauthorization of TEA-21 was not as successful. Congress enacted the first extension of TEA-21 that year in light of disagreement between both houses of Congress and the White House over funding levels.

A second Consensus Program visit occurred in February 2004. Regional support for the Consensus Program remained strong, and the delegation again met with representatives and agency officials, emphasizing Southern California's unique role in the nation's economy. Again Congress extended the reauthorization, having failed to resolve funding level questions. The current extension, the seventh to date, expires on May 31st.

Momentum is building strongly in Washington to enact a reauthorization before the May deadline, and the region has responded with continued support for the Consensus Program. On February 16th and 17th, the delegation will meet with members of Congress and agency officials to stress the need to maintain core programs, create projects of national significance, fund New Starts projects, and give regions innovative financing tools. SCAG is coordinating the effort, as in past years, as authorized by the 2004 SCAG State and Federal Legislative Program.

Government Affairs will report on the outcome of the Consensus Program visit to Washington at the March Regional Council and Transportation and Communications Committee meetings.

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